



Explorative study to identify what works when supporting parents with second generational child protection concerns.

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2019

**QCBI Innovation Fund:**  
**Enhancing Children's and Young People's Outcomes**

Funding Measure under the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI) through Dormant Accounts Funding



An Roinn Leanaí  
agus Gnóthaí Óige  
Department of Children  
and Youth Affairs

ciste na  
gcuntas díomhaoin  
the dormant  
accounts fund

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#### List of Abbreviations

CPWS	Child Protection and Welfare Services
QCBI	The Quality and Capacity Building Initiative
ACE	Adverse Childhood Experiences

#### List of Appendices

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## Abstract

Second generation parents are parents who had experience of the Child Protection and Welfare Services (CPWS) in their own childhood whose children are now in the care of the State (Fusco, 2015; Marshall, 2011). The main aim of this study was to identify what could be learnt from second generation parents, and professionals who had experience of direct work with second generation parents, to improve outcomes for children in the care of the State.

There were two phases to the study. Phase one involved identifying what percentage of parents with children in care in the Tulsa Area had been clients of CPWS during their own childhood. This information was obtained by the social work department completing an internal audit.

Phase two involved obtaining the views of second generation parents and professionals who had experience of direct work with these parents using qualitative methods. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with second generation parents and focus groups were held with professionals.

Analysis of the findings of the interviews and focus groups highlighted a number of common themes for improving supports for second generational parents: the quality of the relationship between parents and services; the importance of good communication; regular contact between parents and services; and providing practical parental support. In addition, both parents and professionals identified attendance at meetings such as Child in Care Reviews and Child Protection Conferences as being difficult for parents.

One key area of difference identified between second generation parents and professionals related to the sharing of information of parents' history of childhood abuse with other services and at meetings. Whereas professionals felt having and sharing this information was beneficial, second generation parents described how talking about their childhood abuse impacted on their present day mental health and how they felt their history of contact with CPWS as a child overly-influenced professionals opinion of their ability to parent their own children.

It is hoped that the findings of this study will assist Tulsa and partnering voluntary organisations in offering better supports to second generation parents with the aim of improving outcomes for their children.

## Chapter 1 Rational

### Introduction

During the period of study, 2017-2018, there were an average of 400 children in care in the Tusla Area. A recurring characteristic of some of the parents of these children was that the parents themselves had been involved with CPWS during their own childhood. Awareness amongst professionals within Tusla and partnering voluntary services of these backgrounds raised two questions amongst professionals:

- 1) What percentage of the parents with children in care were clients of child protection and welfare services during their own childhood?
- 2) What can organisations learn from second generation parents and professionals with experience of direct work with second generation parents which can inform offering better supports to this group of parents with the aim of improving outcomes for their children?

A steering group was developed to oversee the two phases of this study. The steering group comprised of a Social Work Team Leader and an Aftercare Manager from Tusla, a Family Support Worker and Manager from a local voluntary organisation and a second generation parent. The steering group decided, with the Area Manager's agreement, to adopt a mixed-method approach to address these two questions:

- 1) An internal audit was undertaken by the social work department to identify the percentage of children in care with second generation parents;
- 2) A qualitative explorative study to explore what works when supporting second generation parents.

Funding for this study was provided under the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI) funded under Dormant Accounts by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in 2018.

### Rationale for the study

At the present time in Ireland it is not standard practice to record how many parents involved with CPWS also had contact with these services during their own childhood. International evidence indicates that outcomes for second generation parents and their children can be poorer than first generation parents (Marshall et al 2011; Fusco 2015; Jaffee et al 2013). This study

hypothesised that identifying what supports second generation parents reported finding beneficial and identifying professionals' understanding of what was effective when working with second generation parents, could add to the knowledge and skill base of professionals, statutory and voluntary, who work with these parents and potentially break the transference of child maltreatment across generations.

The remainder of the report is made up of five chapters; the literature review, methodology, findings, discussion of findings and recommendations and conclusion.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

A wide-ranging review of academic journals, governmental reports, policies and statistics was carried out on material relevant to intergenerational abuse and second generation parents. The key sources of information drawn on for this report include Mayer and Thursby (2012) and Larkin et al (2012) in relation to adverse childhood experiences and Marshall et al (2011), Fusco (2015) and Jaffee et al (2013) in relation to second generation parents.

Recent decades have seen an increase in an understanding of the impact of adverse experiences in childhood and its association with poorer outcomes for children (Felitti, et al, 1998). Such poorer outcomes include educational attainment, employment, involvement in crime, family breakdown as well as the potential development of chronic illness in adult life. For parents who have experienced abuse in their childhood their social and/or material resources may be diminished heightening the risk of parents' experiencing stress and creating challenges for them in meeting their children's needs (Thompson, 2006).

According to Ireland's national policy for children and young people, Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (2014), when interventions are evidenced based and delivered by appropriately skilled individuals, there are significant benefits for children, young people and their families, and an effective and efficient use of resources. Other jurisdictions have recognised that a greater understanding of second generational maltreatment is needed and screening tools that are more sensitive to the nuances and context of each family situation and environment need to be developed. These tools need to consider the families risk and protective factors to provide a more complex view of the family function, potential for harm and source of resilience (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2016).

### Second Generation Parents and Child Protection and Welfare Services

The vast majority of parents want the best for their children, yet second generational child maltreatment is a significant feature in CPWS. The progression from child client to adult client as a parent involved with CPWS is often referred to as second generational contact in the literature. (Fusco, 2015; Marshall; Jaffee et al, 2013).

Given its often involuntary, conflictual and stigmatising nature, involvement with CPWS is generally a highly stressful experience for parents and children. Furthermore, personal, family and community experiences of poverty, social exclusion and discrimination precondition many caregivers to mistrusting services. These factors make successfully engaging families with



services in an open and trusting manner a challenging task for CPWS staff. Added to this, the lack of resources, large caseloads, demands of procedures and administrative tasks, greatly reduce the time and opportunity available to staff to build trusting relationships with parents. The importance of the parent and professional having a strong, supportive relationship has been identified as being essential to achieving the desired changes in the lives of children and achieving the best outcomes for children (Kemp et al, 2014).

Research shows that second generation parents of childhood abuse are at an increased risk of maltreating their own children. The pathway to this increased risk is a complex one and the interaction between risk and protective factors play a significant role. Risk factors have been found to occur at an above average rate in individuals with a history of abuse. For example, Jaffe et al, (2014) found that mothers with a history of neglect or abuse displayed high levels of risk factors and low levels of protective factors. Risk factors included high levels of social disadvantages, mental health problems, domestic abuse from a partner and substance abuse, with low levels of socially supportive relationships.

Research with second generation parents also highlights that parents who were previously involved with child welfare systems were more difficult to engage (Fusco, 2015). In this study, four areas of engagement with child welfare services were explored comparing the responses of first generational and second generational mothers. The four areas explored were *buy in*, *receptivity*, *working relationship* and *trust*. Second generational mothers scored lower in all four areas, apart from mothers who were in foster care as a child; these mothers had a significantly better relationship with workers. Whilst mothers who spent time in foster care had better relationships with workers, these mothers felt particularly distressed when their own children became involved with child welfare services as this experience brought back feelings of their own grief and loss when they had been removed as a child from their own home (Fusco, 2015). Lower engagement with services is linked to poorer outcomes for the children. Marshall (2011) has noted that second generation mothers were less likely than first generation mothers to have their children returned from foster care while Aparicio (2017) found that teenage mothers in foster care often wanted to ‘avoid’ the system with regards to their own children.

Studies based on the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) strongly associate the children of parents who have high ACE Scores as at greater risk of ACEs. ACE scores are calculated from the number of ‘yes’ responses to questions about each of 10 ACE categorises. The ACE categories include:

- Emotional, physical and sexual abuse;
- Emotional and physical neglect;
- Witnessing domestic violence;
- Growing up with mentally ill or substance abusing household members;
- Loss of a parent or having a household member incarcerated.

(Larken et al, 2012: 3)

In order to prevent adverse childhood experiences transmission from one generation to the next, the ACE approach argues that services need to recognise that parents themselves may have high adverse childhood experiences scores and tailor services accordingly (Mayer and Thursby, 2012).

### Understanding second generation parents

Not all parents who experienced childhood maltreatment will perpetrate child abuse or neglect themselves. Most parents who experienced maltreatment as children will not abuse or neglect their own children. However, many studies found that parents who experienced childhood maltreatment are, as a group, more likely than non-abused parents to have children who are abused or neglected. It is not yet clear why this is the case or what factors make the greatest differences for families (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2016).

A number of theories have been developed to improve professionals understanding of intergenerational patterns of maltreatment (Thornberry and Henry, 2013). The most commonly cited include:

- Social learning theory which suggests that individuals' behaviour is shaped through observation and imitation. If individuals experience abusive or neglectful parenting, then they may develop beliefs that these behaviours are acceptable and/or effective and repeat them with their own children.
- Attachment theory which highlights the importance of a quality, early attachment with a caregiver. If a caregiver is not caring and sensitive to a child's needs the individual struggles to form healthy attachments into adulthood. This is theorised to increase the likelihood of abusive behaviour as an adult.
- Ecological theories which view child maltreatment as the result of multiple influences and systems, including family, community and societal factors.

- Trauma-based models which suggest that maltreatment, like other forms of violence, produce trauma symptoms. If left untreated and unresolved, these trauma symptoms may increase the likelihood that the individual will engage in violent behaviour, including child maltreatment, as an adult.

(Child Welfare Information Gateway 2016)

Research grounded in these theories look for specific risk factors or pathways to better explain intergenerational patterns. Identifying these pathways can help professionals develop and select the most effective prevention strategies.

Research shows that families that broke the cycle of child abuse and neglect had fewer serious financial difficulties and higher levels of perceived social support (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2016). CPWS supporting individuals to lower risk factors such as social isolation, substance use and mental illness and intervene effectively to increase their protective factors to reduce child abuse and neglect in all families is more likely to be successful in improving outcomes for their children.

#### CPWS services practices with second generation parents: what works

Evidence shows that child protection and welfare policies and practice frameworks which focus on strengths- based and family-centred practice while simultaneously attempting to reduce identified risks to child safety, are essential to achieving positive outcomes for children and families. If parents are part of the planning process and participate in the decision-making process there is a greater likelihood of improved child and family outcomes (Kemp et al, 2014).

In their study of female victims of domestic violence, Johnson and Sullivan (2008) identified a number of factors that families found helpful when involved with CPWS. These included:

- Keeping mothers informed and providing information on relevant services;
- Placing children with trusted relatives or friends;
- Not labelling the family or describing them as defectives or dysfunctional as this added to feelings of victimisation.

This study also highlighted how obtaining the agreement and commitment of the parents to a child protection plan created a therapeutic environment between the parents, the child and the services working with them. Participants in this study also found it extremely helpful when CPWS workers advocated on their behalf to other services and to family members (Johnson and Sullivan, 2008).

Kemp et al's (2014) study found that the attitudinal behaviours of clients such as optimism that change is possible, hope, and motivation to participate need to be recognised and acknowledged by CPWS workers. It was found that if these were overlooked in initial and ongoing encounters with families, there was an increasing chance that parents will disengage and not show up for appointments. Support supervision was found to be a significant factor in supporting CPWS workers in positively engaging with families, maintaining a focus on their clients' attitudinal behaviours and lowering levels of burnout amongst staff.

Studies show that additional efforts need be made to support women who have a history of abuse or neglect, as their children are at elevated risk of experiencing physical maltreatment. Second generation parents tend to have below average educational attainment, less social supports, higher levels of mental health issues and less positive childhood experiences to draw on when raising their own children. Due to their childhood experiences, these parents are in greater need of support from services, however based on their childhood experiences they are less likely to seek support. Fusco (2015; p545) states 'Greater knowledge about the risk profiles of these parents [second generation] as well as an understanding of how they perceive the child welfare system, can help improve service delivery'.

Dixon et al's (2005) study found that parents are open to speaking about their history of childhood abuse to services and studies demonstrates that CPWS professionals need to sensitively establish whether a parent has been abused in their childhood. Findings from Marshall et al (2011) found second generation parents reported needing more services such as domestic violence, counselling 66% compared to 52% for first time generation parents, educational services 76% compared 66% for first generation parents and mental health services 66% compared to 54% for first generation parents.

A caveat attaches to professionals establishing the parents' history of child abuse, however, as such information may lead to bias in relation to decision making, particularly decisions in relation to reunification. As Wulcyyn (2004) observes 'little is known about reunification

decision making, therefore, it is not known whether courts use records of parents own childhood maltreatment histories in determining reunification decisions'. Care needs to be taken by professionals that their decisions and recommendations are based on the parents' present circumstances rather than their childhood circumstances and contact with CPWS (Marshall et al, 2011) and used only to inform case planning. Parents can be taught skills to help them to parent positively and to become more effective and consistent, thus reducing the aversive exchanges between parents and their children (Pears 2001).

### Second Generational parents in Tusla Area under study

As previously noted, presently it is not standard practice in Ireland to gather figures in relation to the number of parents in contact with CPWS who also had contact with these services during their childhood. As noted, there is some international evidence to indicate that outcomes for these parents and their children are poorer than first generation parents (Marshall et al, 2011; Fusco, 2015; Jaffee et al, 2013). In Jaffee et al's (2013) UK study, mothers who had experienced significant abuse in their childhoods were 5.31 times more likely to have a child who will experience physical maltreatment when compared to the children of mothers who had not suffered significant abuse in their childhood.

Fusco's (2015) study reviewed the background of 336 mothers with children under 5 years of age who were in receipt of CPWS. Of these 336 mothers, 42% reported that they had contact with CPWS during their own childhood. As part of this research study an audit of second generation parents amongst children in care in the Tusla Area was carried out by the social work department in September 2018. This audit identified that of the 147 children in care where information was provided, the childhood background of 97 of the 144 mothers was known to CPWS (Boylan, 2019). Of these 97 mothers, 62 had CPWS involvement in their own childhoods. Of the 133 fathers identified in the audit, the childhood background of 72 was known. Of these 72, 18 had CPWS involvement in their childhood (Boylan, 2019).

For those parents for whom their childhood background was known to CPWS, 66% of the mothers and 63% of the fathers experienced neglect in their childhood. Of the 147 children in care for whom information was provided, 78% were in contact with CPSW due to neglect. Boylan (2019) argues that consideration needs to be given to the potential link between these children's current experiences in the care of their parents and their parents childhood experience of neglect. These audit findings are similar to the findings of a study completed by

Widom et al (2015) which found parents with histories of neglect were at increased risk for intergenerational maltreatment.

Research has highlighted that little is known about how these second-generation parents feel about being involved with CPWS (Fusco, 2015). The aim of this explorative study was to learn from second-generation parents what they found useful when engaging with CPWS staff. In addition, this study also aimed to learn from CPWS staff with experience of direct work with clients what they found effective when working with second generation parents. This information would then be used to better shape the collective CPWS response to the children of second-generation parents, both statutory and voluntary.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore what works when supporting second generation parents, that is parents involved with CPWS as adults who were also involved with these services as children. It was hypothesised that hearing from second generation parents what supports they find beneficial this knowledge could then inform the knowledge and skills base of professionals who work directly with second generation parents and assist in attempting to break the transference of child maltreatment across the generations.

There were two questions this research attempted to address:

- 1) What percentage of parents with children in care were clients of Child Protection Welfare Services during their own childhood?
- 2) What can organisations learn from second generation parents and professionals with experience of direct work with second generation parents which can inform offering better supports to this group of parents with the aim of improving outcomes for their children?

A mixed methods approach was adopted to address the two research questions of this explorative study. Mixed methods is a research approach whereby researchers collect and analyse both quantitative and qualitative data within the same study (Bower et al, 2013).

### Phase I

Phase I of this study involved a quantitative review, carried out by a Social Work Team Leader, of the children in the care of the Tusla Area on a specified date in 2018 to establish the prevalence of abuse in the childhood of their parents. Individual questionnaires for each child were distributed to every social worker allocated to a child in care in the Tusla Area. The questionnaire asked the social worker to identify:

- The nature of the care order;
- The reason for admission to care for the child;

- The age range of the child's father and mother;
- If the child's father and mother had been known to social work during their own childhood;
- If the child's father and mother had been known to social work what the nature of the concern was.

There were 404 children in care in the Tusla Area at the time of the quantitative review. A total of 147 completed questionnaires were received. This represented a response rate of 36%.

Information in relation to the child's mother involvement with CPWS was known in 67% of the 147 (97) completed questionnaires. Of these 97 mothers, 62 had been involved with child protection social work during their childhood (i.e. 64%). With regard to fathers, information in relation to their involvement with child protection and welfare was known in 53% of the 147 (78) completed questionnaires. Of these 78 father, 18 had been involved with CPWS during their childhood (i.e. 25%)

A total of 80 parents were identified from the quantitative review of 147 children in care completed questionnaires as having experienced CPWS in their own childhood. Of the 62 mothers who had involvement with social work, some experienced more than one form of abuse in their childhood. The majority of these mothers (41:66%) experienced neglect during their childhood. In relation to the 18 fathers, again some experienced more than one form of abuse and the majority of these fathers (15: 83%) experienced neglect during their childhood. Of the 147 children in care where questionnaires had been completed, the majority (78%) had been admitted into care due to neglect.

## Phase II

Phase II of this study was qualitative in nature and involved semi-structured interviews with second generation parents and focus groups with professionals with direct experience of working with second generation parents. A total of six one-to-one semi-structured interview were conducted with six parents and two focus groups were facilitated with 13 professionals.



### Interview and focus group selection

Due to the explorative nature of the study, non-probability sampling methods were adopted. Both purposive and snowballing non-probability sampling were used to select potential participants. Purposeful sampling is a technique commonly used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Snowball sampling is where research participants recruit other participants for a study.

The participants for the semi-structured interviews were asked to participate as they were known to CPWS as a child and were now known to these services as a parent. CPWS and other local service providers identified potential participants who met the study criteria and informed them about the research and invited them to meet the researcher to learn more about the study.

The following criteria were used to select participants for the semi-structured interviews with parents:

- As a child they or their parents had been involved with CPWS;
- As a parent they are or were involved with the Tusla Area CPWS with regards to their child;
- They had an identifiable link or support worker available during the period of the study.

The following criteria were used to select participants for the professionals focus groups:

- Employed to provide social care support and/or education to adults regarding their parenting role;
- Working in the Tusla Area;
- In current or similar post for 12 months or more;
- Experience of working with parents who were clients of CPWS during their own childhood.

## Data collection

### *Focus Groups*

A total of two focus groups were held with professionals exploring their experiences of what works well when working with parents who had contact with CPWS services in their own childhoods. Focus groups are a method whereby people's opinions and experiences surrounding a specific topic can be discussed (Kitzinger, 1994) and it is a method that has the capacity to elicit rich inter-group interpretations (Bradbury-Jones, Sambrook and Irvine, 2009).

The focus groups were approximately 45 minutes to an hour long. In accordance with best practice guidelines, the groups were facilitated by a moderator and assistant moderator (Eliot, 2005). This practice allows the moderator to focus on nurturing discussion while the assistant moderator takes notes and oversees any recording device. An informal list of questions was used by the moderator (see Appendix I). Prompts and open-ended questions were used to encourage the participants to articulate their opinions and experiences in relation to the research questions.

A total of 13 professionals took part in the two focus groups; eight in attendance at one group and five in the second group. There was representation from the key relevant services for the Tusla Area including Family Support, Outreach, Social Work, and Social Care and from voluntary and statutory agencies.

### *Semi-structured interviews*

Semi-structured interviews are commonly used in qualitative research. This method allows the research to collect open-ended data, to explore participants thoughts, feelings and beliefs about a particular topic and to delve deeply into personal and sometimes sensitive issues. This approach typically consists of a dialogue between researcher and participant, guided by a flexible interview protocol and enhanced by follow-up questions, probes and comments (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2019).

A total of six semi-structured interviews were completed with parents; one father and five mothers (See Appendix H for questions).

## Validity and reliability

Validity in research is concerned with the accuracy and truthfulness of findings (Le Compte and Goetz, 1982) while reliability is concerned with the consistency, stability and repeatability of participants' accounts (Seltiz et al, 1976). The use of multiple methods or data sources, known as triangulation, is a qualitative research strategy used to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 1999) and to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources.

This study used multiple data sources, including professionals with differing expertise and backgrounds, and parents, and structured methods of data gathering to heighten the validity and reliability of its findings.

In addition, to limit researcher bias, the questions developed for the semi-structured interviews and focus group were reviewed and approved by the research steering group and the researcher engaged in reflective practice throughout the research process.

## Ethical Approval

The ethical review of research is an essential component of research governance. As this study involved both service users and service providers as research participants, ethical approval was required from Tusla's Research Ethics Committee (REC). The primary role of a REC is to protect the dignity, rights and welfare of research participants. In addition, REC's focus is on ensuring the maximum benefit of the research whilst minimising the risk of actual or potential harm.

The study's application for ethical approval outlined the aims and objective of the research and its methodology and took into particular consideration the following issues:

- The potential intrusion on the privacy of service users;
- The potential vulnerability of service users;
- The sensitivity for service users and staff of the study topic and the provision of appropriate supports during the lifetime of the study.

The study application also outlined:

- How participants were identified and selected

- The parents' information sheet (Appendix E) and consent form (Appendix G)
- The professionals' study information leaflets and posters (Appendix A and B)
- Professionals' participant information leaflet (Appendix F) and consent form (Appendix G).

Ethical approval was received from the Tusla Research Ethics Committee, which operates under the remit of the National Research Office in Tusla, The Child and Family Agency.

### Confidentiality

All prospective participants were provided with written information on the study and what their participation would involve. Individuals who agreed to participate signed a consent form prior to being interviewed or taking part in a focus group. The consent forms noted the parameters of confidentiality.

All participants were informed of the researcher's reporting responsibilities under Children First in relation to child safety and the limitations this placed on confidentiality within the study.

### Data Analysis

Both the semi-structured interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. The transcripts were coded and analysed thematically. This categorization of the data enabled the research to identifying similarities and differences in the data. The findings from the structured interviews and focus group were also cross-referenced and compared with findings identified through the review of literature.

All identifying information was removed during the transcribing process for both the focus groups and semi-structured interviews. All participants in the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups were referred to by a code number. No identifying information from respondents such as names of participants, names of services or areas were used when compiling the findings. All recordings and documentation were filed securely on a password protected computer with them being deleted 12 months after the completion of the study.

## Limitations

Samples in qualitative research tend to be small in order to support the depth of case-oriented analysis that is fundamental to this mode of inquiry (Sandelowski, 1986). Sample suitability in qualitative inquiry relates to the appropriateness of the sample composition and size.

The intention had been to include parents across the Tusla Area, however, the final sample of parents represented only one part of the Tusla Area. This limited the study's ability to compare service provision across the entire Tusla Area. This limitation was somewhat mitigated by the fact that the parents interviewed had experienced Tusla services in a number of Tusla Areas across the country which meant the parents were able to compare service provision and experience across different Tusla Service Areas.

Due to the funded nature of the study, there were time constraints in relation to the completion of the study. As a result of these time constraints less semi-structured interviews were completed than had initially been planned (10) as some interviews that required rescheduling at the request of the interviewee, despite the best efforts of the researcher, could not be accommodated with the data collection time-frame. While a smaller number of interviews were completed, the participants were still able to provide the richly-textured information relevant to the phenomenon being examined in this explorative study.

## Chapter Four Findings

This chapter of the report outlines the findings of the analysis of the semi-structured interviews with parents and the focus groups. Figure 1 illustrates the code numbers allocated to the research participants. Where names are referenced in the text these are pseudo-names.

Figure 1: Coding for Each Participant

Semi-structured interview: Parents	Focus group A: Professionals	Focus Group B: Professionals
P1	A1	B1
P2	A2	B2
P3	A3	B3
P4	A4	B4
P5	A5	B5
P6	A6	
	A7	
	A8	

### Parents perceptions and views: semi-structured interviews findings

The six parents who were interviewed were known to CPWS in their own childhood and were or had been known to CPWS as parents due to concerns in relation to their own child/ren.

Key themes to emerge from the parents' response were:

- The importance of the relationship between CPWS and parents;
- How parents' feel they are perceived by professionals;
- How parents feel about the sharing of their childhood history of abuse.

In terms of the support second generation parents received from the CPWS there were mixed responses from the parents interviewed.

## Relationships between parents and Child Protection and Welfare Services

### First contact

Parents were asked about how they felt the first time they were contacted by CPWS in relation to their child and what factors lead them to feeling this way. Of the six parents interviewed, two of the parents had initiated contact with CPWS seeking assistance and this seemed to result in a more positive perception of services.

P1: *I contacted them because I was homeless and I needed a place, I was in foster care myself. They helped me with my child. It was great, they did a great job with me, they got me a family support worker and that helped me keep him'*

The remainder of the parents who were contacted by CPWS in relation to concerns about their children described being scared, shocked and terrified when contacted.

P4: *'Scared, very scared, I didn't know what was going to happen. I thought my child would be taken off me and I was really scared at the time. Ya know when you're a child and you go into care that's what you remember'.*

P6: *'I was a bit scared when you find out that the social services are getting involved, but no they eased me when I got to know them. Once I got to know her it was ok. At first I was scared'.*

The parents identified their own previous childhood experience of CPWS as influencing how they felt about being contacted by CPWS.

P6: *'Previous with them, because when I was growing up with them, they have the authority to take your baby'*

Another parent (P4) described it as *'remembering back to when I went into care, how social workers just, they didn't tell you anything really, it's just really scary'.*

### Quality of relationships with staff

In terms of their relationships with CPWS staff, parents indicated that, perhaps unsurprisingly, the quality of staff varied and therefore the quality of the relationship varied, as P6: *observed 'there is some really, really good and there is some that's not so good so I do try and avoid the not so good people'.*

The parents identified a number of factors they felt led to them having a good relationship with services. These included good communication, staff who are easy to talk to, regular contact from staff through home visits and phone calls and consistency of staff.

In terms of consistency of staff, the impact of this was described from two perspectives – the negative impact of a high turnover of staff and the positive impact of having the same staff in their lives. One parent described how having six social workers in four years meant they found it difficult to build a relationship with them now, as they build a bond and start to trust them and then they leave. Another two parents highlighted the importance of working with the same staff member:

P4: *'Family Support worker, if I didn't understand anything she'd just explain it to me and she'd explain it twice if I needed it. Just patient, it was like she was just a parent to older people. Social work say all these things in there kind of language and a parent hasn't a clue, coming from out of care and most of us don't have great education coming out of care'.*

P1: *'Yeah they are there every week and you knew what you had to do every week with the family support worker'.*

#### What helps parents

Parents were asked what they found useful about the CPWS and what they would like to change about services. The services participants had experience of included the Youth Advocate Programme (YAP), Tusla – the Child and Family Agency, Women's Refuge, Tusla Family Support, Meath Springboard Family Support, Barnardos, the Housing Authority, Public Health Nurses and the Aftercare services.

The interviewed parents identified services that provided advice and support to improve practical skills such as feeding, washing and changing babies as well as establishing routines as being very beneficial. In addition, these parents reported that being able to ring and ask questions helped to reduce their anxiety and isolation. For example, one parent spoke about how lonely being a parent could be and how lucky she felt to be able to get both herself and her baby dressed and to go to her addiction services and have a chat with another adult.

YAP was identified as a brilliant service for teenagers by two of the six parents interviewed, as P3 explained:

*'he still stuck around and he didn't just throw his hands up and say no I'm not dealing with him, I started enjoying the trips we went on and I suppose it mellowed me down and that's*



*when things started looking up. But then Y.A.P stopped and then I was kinda back to square one again'.*

Attending courses was also identified as being very helpful by the majority of the parents who also highlighted the enjoyment they got from socialising with other parents:

*P2: 'I loved working with Barnardos, I done a course it's completely free, they just offered to genuinely work with me and they taught me so much.'*

*P6: 'I loved the class in Springboard I actually made friends out of that class. I found them a lot more helpful than social workers'*

The importance of a course on building healthy relationships for teenagers before they leave the care system was raised by one parent:

*P4: 'when you leave care I think this is just absolutely horrendous. You're taken away from your family and you grew up in care with these people and then you're left on your own, you've got no skills'.*

Half of all the interviewees, mentioned that the age for aftercare eligibility should be extended and that extended eligibility should not be linked to being in education (P6, P2 and P4):

*P6: 'One social worker said, we can't let you be homeless but you will have to get an education if you want to have a life. I didn't want to get into education and then when I was sitting in that house with the three men I was there, oh my god if I just listened to her I wouldn't be sitting here frightened and scared and in a locked in the room. But then I was like no I shouldn't have to feel guilty because I didn't go through an education, there's a lot of other reasons why I was sitting in the house. When you have to move out of care social workers move you into a house or a room. They gave me a room in a house with three strange men that I was going to live with. And then they just left me and forgot about me'.*

### [What parents want to change](#)

When parents were asked what they would change about services, the majority discussed how their first meeting with social workers went. They described how they found this first meeting very hard and how it brought up their anxiety from childhood. They also described how they never found the social workers approach soft or meaningful:

*P4: Like at the very start she came in asked me all these indecent questions and made me cry no it wasn't nice, it wasn't nice. I think a social worker, when they're dealing with something so tricky, I think they just they can't go in all guns blazing, but once we got over that and when time set in she was really nice'.*

P6: *They can be very intimidating, to be honest with you. They can be very judgemental in a sense, like I understand they have a job to do exactly, they've a job it's their job, they get up they come in at nine and then they go home at five so it's their job, and I don't think some of them realise the impact, of what they say, can stick with people because they are on a different case the next day.*

Meetings with professionals was another area of services that parents would like to see changed with two of the parents discussing how hard it was to attend professional meetings:

P5: *'There would have been nine of us, basically all professionals, professionals coming to an agreement what they think would be best, to be honest I felt like I was pushed in a corner and that really annoyed me'*

P6: *'Do ya know when there's one of them meetings when a child moves onto the C.P.N's you're rated on a score from one to ten you rate parenting skills and his parenting skills that was the most degrading thing I've ever had to go through in my whole life'.*

#### [Sharing information about childhood history of abuse.](#)

The final questions explored with the parents how they felt about services knowing about their history with CPWS and how they felt about being second generation parents. The responses to questions about their childhood history of abuse being known and being the second generation of their family known to CPWS were mixed and the answers given appeared to be influenced by what service the parents were involved with.

Some parents felt that if services knew they were known to CPWS as a child then they were judged negatively. Parents talked about feeling 'stamped' because they had been known to CPWS as a child. In addition, they felt their past being brought into the present affected their mental health. All parents felt that their history of abuse was a trigger for them.

P5: *'They brought it up themselves about my own childhood which is pretty bad it's very painful my own childhood, it takes its toll on me. To me it's still fresh, its always going to affect me like that. I had a meeting yesterday in relation to the unborn babies and it brought my past history from when I was a child right up until the marriage breakdown. I was in a very very bad state, a very bad state and I just went home and it's just, it really destroyed my day it just, basically I went home and cried myself to sleep. That's something that's always going to affect me so it is'.*

The parents felt that instead of meeting the person and supporting them in the present, professionals were reading their files and judging them by their past instead:

P3: *'They had the file in the court and I just hung my head, that file was to do with me as a kid. And they brought that into court with them, which I don't think they should have. Cos it wasn't me on trial it was to do with Anna and everything else'.*

Of the six parents interviewed, two of the parents spoke about how in the past professionals had made comments that felt derogatory to them, for example how they were rearing their child/ren like their mother or that they don't want to be like their mother.

Some of the parents acknowledged that it was helpful when some services had information about their history. However, they felt that it was not necessary for everyone to know about their childhood history:

P6: *'People look at you differently when they know you were in care. They either feel sorry for you or you get the oh Jesus wondering what did she do. Addiction services they know that I'm in care, that was a good thing that they know, they understand that it wasn't easy do ya know and sometimes it's nice for people to just say, she had it hard do ya know at one stage in her life she did have it hard. But it's not a thing that I want everybody to know all the time'.*

The parents were also asked about how they felt about being involved with CPWS as a child and now again as a parent. Most of the interviewees were grateful to CPWS for taking them into care and taking them out of the abusive home they were in. Nevertheless, all of the parents described having had a negative experience at some stage when working with CPWS staff. They described their experiences of CPWS as hard, horrible, and scared to contact them due to the uncertainty of what will happen:

P2: *'Any person myself personally who I know who grew up in care we all say the same thing we're stamped when we turn 18, we're stamped. Like none of my siblings have their own kids like. And then my mother was in care and then her mother was in care, it's a circle. And I'm doing everything I can to break it like. It's an absolute circle, a vicious circle too to be in. It makes you scared to ever want to be a parent and it should be something exciting. I honestly wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy'.*

## Professionals' perceptions and views: focus group findings

### The importance of relationships

Similar to the parents interviewed, the focus groups emphasised the importance of the relationship between parents and CPWS professionals. Both focus groups identified building a trusting relationship as a key part of working with second generation parents. Professionals felt that it took longer to build a trusting relationship with this group of parents as some of them have had negative experiences of CPWS when they were children.

A2: *'A lot of time they don't trust the services because of their experiences as a child and that's hard, as well it's hard to kind of break that'.*

A3: *'I do think you can build up a very good working relationship, they trust piece takes a bit longer sometimes'.*

Parents' struggling to stay in the present and not being drawn back to their past was highlighted as something that could impact on the length of time it took to build a relationship with second generation parents:

A1: *'Constantly working on bringing them back, acknowledging their experience of the past but constantly working on bringing them back to the present'.*

B2: *'Parents can come to Social Workers with more caution, cautious on what information they want to share'.*

Professionals felt that parents who had had negative experiences were afraid of services, were less likely to engage with services, and may hide from workers:

A3: *'It's fear, I suppose because of that fear my experience is then they don't want to attend the hospital appointment. If they do not attend hospital appointments we don't know if everything is ok. But it is a fear of what could happen or what they experienced in the past'.*

Family Support Workers felt that families saw them differently to social workers and that families behaved differently with them. As they saw families more regularly and worked with them for longer periods, Family Support Workers felt they could build a good trusting relationship with parents.

B5: *'I think they see us differently because I think they behave one way with Social Workers and then when they realise I'm not a social worker they kind of open up more'.*

B2 *'I think you're right with the Social Work title comes, we are judgemental'.*

The word 'game' was brought up by professionals and they talked about how parents play different games for different professionals or behave differently with different professionals.

B2: *'I have heard it referred to as that before, either you have to play the game, how you deal with these professionals. There is no point getting irate with them cause it is only going to make things worse for you'.*

Both focus groups discussed the challenge of building an effective relationship with parents, pointing out the positives while also explaining to parents how they can improve their parenting. They also spoke about how daunting it had to be for parents speaking to so many professionals about their life experiences:

B1 *'It is daunting coming into a whole room full of professionals, the spotlight is on you and all your faults are being exposed'. Child in Care reviews are the same, cause the foster carer is there and they have made a success of what the parent feels hasn't, very difficult for them to listen, how well the kid is doing'.*

#### Becoming aware of parents' childhood experiences

Professionals were asked about when they became aware of the parents' history of childhood abuse. The majority of professionals reported they were aware straight away. A number of ways in which professionals became aware of the parents' history of childhood abuse were identified:

- Through old case files
- Colleagues that may have worked with the family in the past
- Through meeting with the families and speaking with them as the parents would know the jargon or know the system well.

Professionals felt that having the case history allowed them to acknowledge to the parent how their childhood experience may be affecting how they are parenting today:

A1: *'I think it helps but I think in my experience I'd have to be very reflective in knowing it but not letting it form a judgment, so I'm taking the situation at face value and not let it guide how I work with them'.*

A2: *'It is history repeating itself so they are coming in with the same issues that their mother would have come in with and sometimes they can't really see. You have to remind them of the damage that has been done to their children. You think about everything that when you were young what your mother went through how you felt.'*

Some of the professionals' comments indicated a sense of an inevitability that these parents have contact with CPWS:

A2: *'it is just the way it is going to happen, that this is the way your childhood was, you are going to have these Social Workers in your life'*

A5: *'they don't know any different they think this is normal'*.

Second generation parents requiring extra support was a theme identified by both focus groups. Professionals spoke about how second generation parents had not had a positive parenting role model growing up and how they may have been through a traumatic experience.

### What helps

Professionals spoke about how they felt methods for supporting families had improved as a result of Meitheal and the Signs of Safety meetings. Both are strengths-based approaches that focus on the positives aspects of parents and how services can support parents to parent more effectively.

A3: *'The family I'm thinking of, signs of safety has been a big change for them and they have all acknowledged how it's much better now and they are so happy'*.

One caveat to these methods identified by professionals, however, was that parents could struggle to find a support network to attend these meetings who were non-professionals as given the parents' own childhood experiences their family or friend circles may not be appropriate for child protection interventions. Timely access to these methods was also highlighted as an issue:

P2: *'The access in the service through Meitheal doesn't happen as quickly as perhaps we would like, likewise with the signs and safety it is not fully rolled out but I do think that is a much more positive way of working collaboratively with families and to find the solutions with in their own resources and their own network before it goes more formal'*.

Professionals spoke about parents having an advocate working with them who attends meetings with them. The advocate would be someone the parents trust and have a good relationship with. This person could take notes during the meeting for the parent, speak on their behalf and answer any questions the parent may have after the meeting.

Professionals feel that child in care reviews, child protection conferences and court proceedings can be over whelming for parents, especially second generation parents as they may have had negative past experiences and some of the jargon used is avoidable.

A1 *'It's really breaking things down, so you have a meeting with social work and going back afterwards and it literally is breaking it right down for them. So it's an extra phone call it's not just going to the meeting with them, I feel that works'*

A key theme in the focus groups was the importance of education, parenting courses, cook-it programmes, and local parenting programmes. B2 *'Parenting programmes for everybody, community level, voluntary option community kind of level support'*. Along with outreach services for families A6 *'I think a lot of professional services have no idea what goes on behind closed doors'*. A4 *'It would make everyone's life a lot easier if the services did outreach'*.

In both focus groups, participants spoke about bring it back to basics, being patient with families, hearing the parents' voices but constantly returning to the needs of the child, demonstrating to parents, role play and providing consistency to parents:

A7: *'Every parent parents differently and every child is different so you have to tailor it to the parent and the child and sometimes it is going back to the very beginning, the basics and attachment showing and demonstrating'*.

A1: *'Consistency in terms of the professional of working with that family, so kind of you say if you can keep to it. I know social work turnover is a huge issue for those families I work with, so that they can keep, in so far as possible, the same professional involved even if it is a family support worker, they build up that trust, it's really hard for them to build up the trust again with somebody else'*

## Chapter Five Discussion of Findings

The overall aim of the research was to find out from both second generation parents and CPWS professionals what has worked well when working with second generation parents and what supports these parents have found useful.

Overall there was considerable agreement between second generation parents and CPWS professionals with a number of common themes being identified by them. These themes included:

- Positive trusting relationships between parent and CPWS;
- Consistency of staff working with parents;
- The availability of courses that developed the practical skills of parents;
- The challenges of professional meetings for parents.

### Positive, trusting relationships

A number of factors were identified by parents and professionals as supporting the development of positive trusting relationships. These included:

- Having regular contact;
- Being open and honest about what was happening;
- Avoiding professional jargon.

Whilst the importance of the relationship was acknowledged by both parents and professionals, it was also recognised that it took a long time to build the relationship with second generation parents and that parents and professionals often struggled to build an effective relationship with each other. As outlined in the findings chapter some of the reasons identified by parents and professionals as impacting on building effective, trusting relationships included:

- Contact with CPWS invoking fear in second generation parents;
- Present contact with services triggering past memories for second generation parents;
- Professional meetings being experienced as challenging and often intimidating for second generation parents;



### Consistency of staff working with parents

Staff turnover was identified as a challenge for parents and professionals. It was seen to affect the relationships that could be built between parents and services. In particular, staff turn over was seen to undermine the development of trust between services and parents. The parents spoke about how difficult it was for them to trust staff and tell them about their lives due to their past experiences as children. When staff leave any bond developed was broken and parents found it challenging to go through the past again with a new member of staff. The importance of the consistency of staff was identified by both parents and professionals and was seen as one of the reasons for FSW being perceived more positively by second generation parents than social workers. Parents ascribed this different perception as being down to them seeing their FSW more often; social workers were described as giving the orders with support workers helping parents practically.

### The availability of courses for parents

The third common theme identified by parents and professional was the usefulness of parenting and educational programmes for second generation parents. Both the parents and professionals who took part in the study agreed that practical support such as changing and feeding babies, routines in the home and learning parenting skills through modelling built healthier relationships between parents and their children as well as parents and professionals. Parents highlighted that socialising and learning with other parents, and not just parents involved with CPWS, in universal community programmes was very beneficial. Professionals also agreed that more community-based parenting programmes would be useful for this group of parents.

### Professional meetings

The fourth area of agreement amongst parents and professionals was how challenging formal CPWS meetings, e.g. Child Protection Conferences, Signs of Safety meetings, could be for second-generation parents. Parents described these meetings as being extremely difficult for them and spoke about having a room full of people telling them what is best, being pushed into corners, being judged and then being told to rate themselves as a parent which they found degrading.

Professionals acknowledged that it could be very daunting for parents to attend meetings on their own and suggested that having an advocate for parents might be of benefit. Professionals

felt there had been some improvement in how professional meetings were conducted with the introduction of new models of practice by Tusla, including Signs of Safety and Meitheal as these models emphasise the strengths of parents.

#### Second generation parents' history of childhood abuse

There was one area in which parents and professionals disagreed and that was in relation to how much information professionals should have in relation to parents' previous involvement with CPWS as children. Whilst both parents and professionals agreed that social workers being aware of their childhood experiences of abuse was helpful, parents were concerned about the way in which this information was used by professionals and also how much information they shared amongst professionals. Whilst recognising that access to the childhood history of parents was beneficial in their work with them, professionals did recognise that this information should not be used when making recommendations or decisions about the parents' present circumstances. Parents', however, felt that professionals judged them when they knew about their childhood history. In addition to feeling judged, or marked, by their history, parents talked about how hearing traumatic events of their childhood discussed at meetings could often be a trigger for them leading to anger and a deterioration in their mental health. Parents expressed a desire to have more control over how much of their childhood history, and with whom, was shared. Parents also spoke about how they wanted professionals to meet them in the present rather than in their past.

## Chapter 6 Emerging Issues and Conclusion

The main aim of this study was to identify what could be learnt from second generation parents and professionals who had experience of direct work with these parents to improve outcomes for children in the care of the State. This report documents the views of second generation parents of CPWS and professionals who have worked with second generation parents on how best to support them.

A number of issues emerged from this study as impacting second generation parents involved with CPWS. These issues included:

- The provision of practical support and building trusting relationships;
- Awareness of parental childhood trauma and its impact of parenting;
- Effective use of and appropriate sharing of parental history of childhood abuse.

### Parental support and trusting relationships

Findings from this research suggests that second generation parents benefit from practical support, parenting courses and support groups which facilitate their socialisation with other parents.

Establishing a trusting relationship was also key for these parents and the parents interviewed felt that this could be achieved by professionals being open and honest, remaining in regular contact with them and avoiding professional jargon when working with them. These findings are similar to previous research with birth families which also identified that families are helped by social workers who are available, attentive and who listen, who are honest and approachable and can help the family feel relaxed and who provide regular information (Schofield and Ward, 2011).

Similar to previous research (Kemp et al, 2014), the findings of this study draws attention to the challenges facing CPWS professionals in how to develop and maintain trusting relationships with parents whilst managing large caseloads, within limited resources and the demands of procedures and administrative tasks which limits the time available to them to invest in relationship building.

### Awareness of parental childhood trauma and its impact on parenting

The data from the interviews with parents indicate that for some of them their childhood traumas may remain unaddressed. Parents talked about how hearing their history of childhood abuse being discussed at meetings could trigger past trauma for them and how these discussions could have a negative effect on their mental health. Research has demonstrated that parents who have experienced traumatic events in their own childhood or adulthood may find it difficult to provide their own children with support and structure if their own trauma remains unaddressed. If parents do not feel safe, they will be less able to keep their children safe (Banyard et al, 2003). In addition, helping parents understand that their reactions to their children may be a result of their own trauma, and not the fault of their children, can help them respond more positively to their children (Tulberg, Avinadav and Chemtob, 2013).

Research also indicates that most parents whose children have been removed from them experience feelings of bereavement, sadness, grief and anger (Schofield and Stevenson, 2009; Neil et al, 2010). These research findings indicate that second generation parents could be dealing with both unresolved childhood trauma and present-day feelings of loss which may impact on their parenting abilities. By understanding trauma, CPWS professionals can create an environment that enables the injured child to feel safe and promotes their ability to cope and to increase resilience and to make intentional efforts to ensure that no action is taken that further causes harm (Cooper and Aratani, 2013).

The findings from this study indicate that in attempting to break the transmission of intergenerational abuse, CPWS may need to give greater consideration to understanding the childhood trauma of parents as well as the child/ren they are working with. Equally, the study findings highlight the importance of ensuring children who come into the care of the State are assisted in processing the trauma they have experienced as part of breaking a potential cycle of abuse if they have children of their own.

Understanding trauma in order to help children also drawing attention to the importance of CPWS recording information on both parents. The audit carried out as part of this research study highlighted that considerably less information was available on the backgrounds of the fathers of the children in care in comparison to their mothers. Where there was information available on fathers, the findings indicated that almost a quarter of them had contact with CPWS in their own childhood.

### Effective use of and appropriate sharing of parental history of childhood abuse

This study's findings would appear to suggest a need to find a way to identify how much parental childhood history is 'enough' for professionals to know in order to work effectively with second generation parents and also explain clearly to these parents why their childhood history is relevant to their present parenting circumstances. The findings would also suggest that there needs to be a greater awareness amongst professionals of how triggering discussions of their childhood experiences can be for these parents and the impact these discussions can have on their mental health.

### Conclusion

The introduction of strengths-based approaches like Signs of Safety and Meitheal to statutory CPWS bodes well for second generation parents. Strengths-based approaches have been highlighted in the literature as working effectively with second generation parents. Nevertheless, findings from this study demonstrates that parents still experience some aspects of the formal CPWS processes negatively, for example parents identified being asked to rate their parenting skills as degrading.

The overall findings of this study show that parents and professionals agree that good, effective communication is key when working with services. Practical support was seen as extremely beneficial for second generational parents along with regular contact. CPWS professionals need to be aware of the language they use and avoid professional jargon. CPWS professionals also need to be aware of how parents are feeling when attending formal meetings with a large number of professionals. Furthermore, CPWS professionals need to consider the impact on the parent when they are sharing sensitive information about the parents' childhood with other professionals or agencies.

Given the number of parents found to have a history of contact with CPWS in their childhood through the social work audit of the Tusla Area, consideration should be given to a more in-depth study of this group of parents in order to better inform CPWS of the needs of this group of parents and the most effective way of working with them to ensure better outcomes for the children of these parents.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A



### **Explorative study to identify what works when supporting parents with second generational child protection concerns.**

Meath Springboard in conjunction with Tusla Child and Family Agency Louth Meath have been granted funding by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs under the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI), to carry out this study. The study aims to:

- Learn from practitioners what works when engaging with second generational parents of child protection
- Learn from the parents what they find useful from staff.
- All information gathered will be written up into a report and sent back to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

**TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH CONTACT HELENA DAVIS ON  
046 9078221 OR 085 8681597**

## HOW CAN YOU HELP? Parents Semi Structured Interview

We wish to recruit parents who were clients of child protection services during their childhood and are currently linked with a parenting / family support service. We will interview each parent and ask them what they found useful from staff.

## FRONT LINE STAFF FOCUS GROUP

We wish to recruit front line staff who have worked in a supportive capacity to parents who were clients of child protection services during their childhood and are currently linked with a parenting / family support service. The front line staff are being asked to attend a focus group to learn from staff what they have found useful also.

**If you can help us or want to find out more please contact Helena in  
Meath Springboard on 046:9078221 or 085:8681597  
Email: [Helena@springboardnavan.ie](mailto:Helena@springboardnavan.ie)**

## BENEFITS

We hope the findings of this study will:

- Identify how best to support second generational parenting among adults who required Child Protection Social Work Services during their childhood.
- Informing professionals of an evidenced based practice, on the feedback received in the focus group and semi structured interviews.
- Furthermore, establishing an evidenced based practice which is effective and efficient use of resources. Which should lead to less child protection involvement in the future thus breaking the cycle of second generational child protection intervention.



**QCBI Innovation Fund:**  
**Enhancing Children's and Young People's Outcomes**



**An Roinn Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige**  
Department of Children and Youth Affairs



**Funding Measure under the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI) through Dormant Accounts Funding**

**TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH CONTACT HELENA DAVIS ON  
046 9078221 OR 085 8681597**



**Explorative study to identify what works when supporting parents with second generational child protection concerns.**

**Information Sheet for Professional Staff supporting Parents to partake in this research**

**Research:** Helena Davis

**Email:** [Helena@springboardnavan.ie](mailto:Helena@springboardnavan.ie)

**Address:** Meath Springboard, Mangan House, Clonmagadden Rd, Windtown, Navan, Co Meath

To Whom It May Concern,

We need your help and support to hear from parents who have direct experience of the Child Protection and Welfare Services

I would be grateful if you could please read the following information sheet, which will explain why the research is being carried out and what it would mean to be involved.

My name is Helena Davis and I am a Family Support Worker with Meath Springboard Family Support Services. I and a small group of people have been granted funding from the Quality Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI) –Department of Children and Youth Affairs - to complete this research on how best to support parents that were known to social services in their childhood and are now with social services as a parent, also known as second generation parents of child protection and welfare services. Through this research we want to learn from your experiences and those of front line staff, how best to support second generation parents and their children.

Are you are working with parents who meet the following criteria:



- During their childhood they or their parents were involved with child protection and welfare services.
- As a parent they are or were involved with Louth/ Meath child protection and welfare services with regard to their child.
- The parent has an identifiable link/ support worker.

We would be grateful if you would speak with parents that meet the criteria of the research, provide them with an information sheet and invite them to meet with the researcher for an information session. During this session the researcher will inform the parents of the research, their right to say no to take part in the research, the importance of confidentiality, anonymity and our responsibilities under Children First 2017.

If the parent agrees to partake in the research your role during this research is support the parent as their link worker/ gatekeeper. The link worker will be asked to be available to the parent during the period of their involvement with research and to follow up on any additional needs that may arise during the process. The link worker will be required to check in with the participant following the semi-structured interview.

If you agree to take part in this study please contact me on the above details.

Your contribution to the research and assistance is greatly appreciated.

Kindest Regards,

Helena Davis (MA.Soc.Stud)





**Explorative study to identify what works when supporting parents with second generational child protection concerns.**

**Information Sheet for Gatekeepers for Professional:**

**Research:** Helena Davis

**Email:** [Helena@springboardnavan.ie](mailto:Helena@springboardnavan.ie)

**Address:** Meath Springboard, Mangan House, Clonmagadden Rd, Windtown, Navan, Co Meath

To Whom It May Concern,

I would be grateful if you could please read the following information sheet, which will explain why the research is being carried out and what it would mean for you to be involved as a line manager to staff attending the front line worker focus group.

My name is Helena Davis and I am a Family Support Worker with Meath Springboard Family Support Services. I and a small group of people have been granted funding from the Quality Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI) –Department of Children and Youth Affairs - to complete this research on how best to support parents that were known to social services in their childhood and are now with social services as a parent, also known as second generation parents of child protection and welfare services. Through this research we want to learn from your experiences and those of front line staff, how best to support second generation parents and their children.

If you have staff which fall under the following criteria:

- As part of the staffs role, they support adults in their parenting role
- Working in the Louth Meath area
- In a current or similar post for 12 months or more

- Experience of worker with parents who were clients of CPW Services during their own childhood.

We would be grateful if you would speak with staff that meet the criteria of the research, provide them with an information sheet and invite them to meet with the researcher for an information session. During this session the researcher will inform staff of the research, their right to say no to take part in the research, the importance of confidentiality, anonymity and our responsibilities under Children First 2017.

Your role in this research as link worker / gatekeeper is support your staff member who has chosen to participate in the research. As the link worker we ask that you be available to the participant during the period of their involvement with research and to follow up on any additional needs that may arise for your staff member during the process. We ask that as a link worker that you check in with the staff member following their attendance at the focus group. If you agree to facilitate a staff member on your team to participate please contact me on the above details.

Your contribution to the research and assistance is greatly appreciated.

Kindest Regards,

Helena Davis. (MA.Soc.Stud)

**QCBI Innovation Fund:**  
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Department of Children  
and Youth Affairs



ciste na  
gcuntas díomhaoín  
the dormant  
accounts fund

**TÚSLA**  
An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency





**Explorative study to identify what works when supporting parents with second generational child protection concerns.**

**Information Sheet for Parents:**

**Research:** Helena Davis

**Email:** [Helena@springboardnavan.ie](mailto:Helena@springboardnavan.ie)

**Address:** Meath Springboard, Mangan House, Clonmagadden Rd, Windtown, Navan, Co Meath

If you are a parent who

- as a child was involved with Child Protection and Welfare services
- have a child who is or was known to Child Protection and Welfare Services
- Reside in county Louth or Meath.

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before deciding whether to take part or not please read on for further information to ensure you understand why the research is being carried out and what it would mean to be involved.

My name is Helena Davis and I am a Family Support Worker with Meath Springboard Family Support Services. Myself and a small group of people have been granted funding from the Quality Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI) –Department of Children and Youth Affairs - to complete this research on how best to support parents that were known to social services in their childhood and are now with social services as a parent, also known as second generation parents of child protection and welfare services. Through this research we want to learn from your experiences and those of front line staff, how best to support second generation parents and their children.

As part of hearing and learning from second generation parents I will be conducting semi-structured interviews / conversations. This will allow for discussions around topics and to gain an insight into your thoughts and experiences of working with social services staff both as a child and as a parent. The interviews will take approximately 30 minutes, I will ask you some questions which you have the choice to answer or not. You will see most of the questions before the interview but some other questions may come up during our conversation. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed for analysis. I will be analysing this data along with my line manager (Sé Fulham) as he is helping me with this research. All data collected will be confidential and participants may withdraw from the study at any point. Personal details collected will be kept electronically on a computer which will be password protected. All



personal information gathered during this study will be shredded 12 months after the research is completed. The one identifying fact to be shared upon completion of the study will be that it was undertaken in counties Louth and Meath.

In keeping with the Children First Act 2017, if the researcher becomes aware of children at risk of neglect, harm or abuse they are mandated to contact the Child Protection Social Work Department and or the Gardaí. If this occurs and where appropriate we will discuss our concerns with you ahead of making contact with the Social Workers and or the Gardaí.

The focus of this research is on what you found useful from staff during your experiences of Child Protection and Welfare services. However by partaking in the research, it may bring up difficult memories, if this occurs we have steps in place to support you;

Ongoing contact with you link worker

Counselling support (please contact me for details)

Contact the SAMARITANS – 24hour help line on Call Freephone: 116 123

Text: 087 2 60 90 90 or email [jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie)

The complaints and feedback procedures of Tusla (Tell Us) and relevant services are: verbally, in person or by phone, to a Tusla staff member or Tusla office; Online at [www.tusla.ie/about/feedback-and-complaints](http://www.tusla.ie/about/feedback-and-complaints); By emailing [tellus@tusla.ie](mailto:tellus@tusla.ie); Send ‘Tell Us’ by text or WhatsApp to 086 014 2775.

It is our aim to share the learning from this study with staff working across Child Protection and Welfare Services, so as to improve outcomes for the children and parents receiving the services today and in the future. We will be publishing the learning from this study and we hope that it will be available on the Department of Children and Youth Affairs Research webpage.

So in summary if you

- If you would like to take part in the research;
- If you would like to view your transcript,
- If you would like additional support following your participation

You can contact me on via email [helena@springboardnavan.ie](mailto:helena@springboardnavan.ie) or ph 085:8681597. Alternatively you can contact your link worker.

A summary of the findings from this research will be sent to all participants, and the full paper will be available.

Your contribution to the research and assistance is greatly appreciated.

Kindest Regards,

Helena Davis (MA. Soc.Stud)



**Explorative study to identify what works when supporting parents with second generational child protection concerns.**

**Information Sheet for Professional:**

**Research:** Helena Davis

**Email:** [Helena@springboardnavan.ie](mailto:Helena@springboardnavan.ie)

**Address:** Meath Springboard, Mangan House, Clonmagadden Rd, Windtown, Navan, Co Meath

If you are a front line worker who

- As part of your role supports adults in their parenting role
- You are in post for 12 months or more
- You work within the child protection and welfare services (statutory or NGO within Louth Meath)
- Experience of worker with parents who were clients of CPW Services during their own childhood.

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before deciding whether to take part or not please read on for further information to ensure you understand why the research is being carried out and what it would mean to be involved.

My name is Helena Davis and I am a Family Support Worker with Meath Springboard Family Support Services. I and a small group of people have been granted funding from the Quality Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI) –Department of Children and Youth Affairs - to complete this research on how best to support parents that were known to social services in their childhood and are now with social services as a parent, also known as second generation parents of child protection and welfare services. Through this research we want to learn from your experiences and those of front line staff, how best to support second generation parents and their children.

I am conducting focus groups to allow for discussions around the topic and to gain an insight into social services staff thoughts and experiences of working with second generation parents. The focus groups will consist of up to 10 professionals who have experience with working with second generation parents. The focus group will last approximately 1 hour. The focus groups will be recorded and transcribed for analysis. I will be analysing this data along with my line

manager (Sé Fulham) as he is helping me with this research. All data collected will be confidential and participants may withdraw from the study at any point. Personal details collected will be kept electronically on a computer which will be password protected. All personal information gathered during this study will be shredded when the research is completed.

In keeping with the Children First Act 2017, if the researcher becomes aware of children at risk of neglect, harm or abuse they are mandated to contact the Child Protection Social Work Department and or the Gardaí. If this occurs and where appropriate we will discuss our concerns with you ahead of making contact with the Social Workers and or the Gardaí.

The focus of this research is on what you found useful as a staff member when working with second generation parents. However by partaking in the research, it may bring up difficult memories, if this occurs we have steps in place to support you, this includes your line manager and access to counselling services. The complaints and feedback procedures of Tusla (Tell Us) and relevant services are: verbally, in person or by phone, to a Tusla staff member or Tusla office; Online at [www.tusla.ie/about/feedback-and-complaints](http://www.tusla.ie/about/feedback-and-complaints): By emailing [tellus@tusla.ie](mailto:tellus@tusla.ie); Send 'Tell Us' by text or WhatsApp to 086 014 2775.

It is our aim to share the learning from this study with staff working across Child Protection and Welfare Services, so as to improve outcomes for the children and parents receiving the services today and in the future. We will be publishing the learning from this study and we hope that it will be available on the Department of Children and Youth Affairs Research webpage.

So in summary if you

- If you would like to take part in the research;
- If you would like to view your transcript,
- If you would like additional support following your participation

You can contact me on via email [helena@springboardnavan.ie](mailto:helena@springboardnavan.ie) or ph 085:8681597. Alternatively you can contact your line manager.

Your contribution to the research and assistance is greatly appreciated.

Kindest Regards,

Helena Davis (MA.Soc.Stud)





**Explorative study to identify what works when supporting parents with second generational child protection concerns.**

### Consent Form

Research: Helena Davis

Email: [Helena@springboardnavan.ie](mailto:Helena@springboardnavan.ie)

Address: Meath Springboard, Mangan House, Clonmagadden Rd, Windtown, Navan, Co Meath

### DECLARATION:

I have read and understood the <b>Information Leaflet</b> about this research project.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
The information has been fully explained to me and I have been able to ask questions, all of which have been answered to my satisfaction.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that I don't have to take part in this study and that I can leave at any time. I understand that I don't have to give a reason for leaving.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I have been assured that information about me will be kept private and confidential. However under the Children First Act 2017, if the researcher becomes aware of children at risk of neglect, harm or abuse they are mandated to contact the Child Protection Social Work Department and or the Gardaí. If this occurs and where appropriate we will discuss our concerns with you ahead of making contact with the Social Workers and or the Gardaí.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I have been given a copy of the Information Leaflet and this completed consent form for my records.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that the interview (with parents) or focus group (with frontline staff) will be audio taped.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that if I wish to do so, I may have access to the transcript of the interview / focus group which I partake in.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>



Storage and future use of information: I give my permission for information collected about me to be stored securely on a computer which will be password protected and will be deleted 12 months after the study is completed.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I am aware that the findings of this research will be published and available to the public.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I consent for direct quotations made by me during this research to be used in publications regarding this research. I am aware that no identifying material regarding me will be made public.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I freely and voluntarily agree to be part of this research study, though without prejudice to my legal and ethical rights.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

-----Participant Name (Block Capitals) | Participant Signature | Date

Contact no. \_\_\_\_\_ Parent ☐ Front line staff ☐

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Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

  
MEATH  
Springboard



**Explorative study to identify what works when supporting parents with second generational child protection concerns.**

**Questions for parents.**

Introductions.

Review the information sheet and consent form.

- 1) How did you feel as a parent the first time a child protection social service contacted you regarding your child?
  - a. What factors lead you to feeling this way?
- 2) What do staff from child protection social work services do today that you find useful?
- 3) Would you tell staff from child protection social services, that you were involved with child protection social services during your childhood?
  - a. If no how come?
  - b. If yes how come?
- 4) When meeting staff from child protection social services what is it that they do that you find unhelpful?
- 5) If you think back to the staff from child protection social services who helped during your childhood, what is it about these staff that helped you?
- 6) Is there any difference between the staff from child protection social services that you meet today as a parent and those that you met as a child?
- 7) How do you think a staff from child protection social services should describe themselves to families when they first meet?



**Explorative study to identify what works when supporting parents with second generational child protection concerns.**

**Focus group Front line staff questions**

Introductions.

Review the information sheet and consent form.

Ice breaker

Short exercise to get participants to introduce each other to group.

1) From your experience what have you found useful when working with parents who were recipients of child protection social work services during their childhood.

2) At what point during your work with parents who were recipients of child protection social work services during their childhood, did you become aware that they had childhood involvement with services?

2.A) Had you known at the start would it have influenced how you approached the parent.

3) What do you think would help parents who were recipients of child protection social work services during their childhood, engage with services?

Conclusion.

## **Bibliography**

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